Amendments to the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A synthetic oligonucleotide **comprising**~~having~~ a nucleotide sequence specifically complementary to nucleotides 324 to 345 of a conserved *gag* region of the HIV-1 genome set forth as SEQ ID NO:5, the oligonucleotide consisting of 21 nucleotides**, wherein the nucleotides** ~~which~~ are linked via phosphorothioate internucleotide linkages,

wherein the oligonucleotide comprises at least two 5'-terminal ribonucleotides, or at least two 3'-terminal and at least two 5' terminal ribonucleotides, and

wherein the ribonucleotides are 2'-substituted ribonucleotides.

2. Cancelled

3. Cancelled

4. (Previously Presented) The oligonucleotide of claim 1, wherein the 2'-substituted ribonucleotides are 2'-O-alkyl ribonucleotides.

5. (Original) The oligonucleotide of claim 4, wherein the ribonucleotides are 2'-O-methyl ribonucleotides.

6. (Previously Presented) The oligonucleotide of claim 1, wherein the oligonucleotide comprises four 3'-terminal ribonucleotides and four 5'-terminal ribonucleotides, flanking 13 deoxynucleotides.

7. (Original) The oligonucleotide of claim 6, wherein the ribonucleotides are 2'-O-methyl ribonucleotides.

8. (Currently Amended) The oligonucleotide of claim 1 **comprising**~~having~~ SEQ ID NO:1.

9. (Currently Amended) The oligonucleotide of claim 1 **comprising**~~having~~ SEQ ID NO:3.

10. (Currently Amended) The oligonucleotide of claim 7 **comprising**~~having~~ SEQ ID NO:1.

11. (Currently Amended) The oligonucleotide of claim 7 **comprising**~~having~~ SEQ ID NO:3.

12. Cancelled.

13. Cancelled.

14. (Original) The oligonucleotide of claim 1 which inhibits HIV-1 or HIV-2 infection in a cell.

15. (Previously Presented) The oligonucleotide of claim 1 which exhibits antiviral activity against HIV-1 or HIV-2.

16. (Currently Amended) A method for introducing an intact oligonucleotide into a mammal, comprising the step of administering to the mammal a synthetic oligonucleotide,

the oligonucleotide being specifically complementary to nucleotides 324 to 345 of a conserved gag region of the HIV-1 genome set forth as SEQ ID NO:5, and consisting of 21 nucleotides**, wherein the nucleotides** ~~which~~ are linked via phosphorothioate internucleotide linkages, wherein the nucleotides of the oligonucleotide comprise at least two 3'-terminal ribonucleotides, at least two 5'-terminal ribonucleotides, or at least two 3'-terminal and at least two 5' terminal ribonucleotides, wherein the oligonucleotide is present in intact form in the systemic plasma following administration.

17. Cancelled

18. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16, wherein the ribonucleotides of the oligonucleotide are 2'-substituted ribonucleotides.

19. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 18, wherein the 2'-substituted ribonucleotides of the oligonucleotide are 2'-O-alkyl ribonucleotides.

20. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 19, wherein the 2'-substituted ribonucleotides of the oligonucleotide are 2'-O-methyl ribonucleotides.

21. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16, wherein the oligonucleotide comprises four 3'-terminal ribonucleotides and four 5'-terminal ribonucleotides, flanking 13 deoxynucleotides.

22. (Original) The method of claim 21, wherein the ribonucleotides of the oligonucleotide are 2'-O-methyl ribonucleotides.

23. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 16, wherein the oligonucleotide **comprises**~~has~~ SEQ ID NO:1.

24. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 16, wherein the oligonucleotide **comprises**~~has~~ SEQ ID NO:3.

25. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 21, wherein the oligonucleotide **comprises**~~has~~ SEQ ID NO:1.

26. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 21, wherein the oligonucleotide **comprises**~~has~~ SEQ ID NO:3.

27. Cancelled

28. Cancelled

29. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein the oligonucleotide is administered orally.

30. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein the oligonucleotide is administered intravenously.

31. (Original) A pharmaceutical formulation comprising the oligonucleotide of claim 1 in a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

32. (Original) A pharmaceutical formulation comprising the oligonucleotide of claim 6 in a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

33. (Original) A pharmaceutical formulation comprising the oligonucleotide of claim 7 in a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

34. (Original) A method of inhibiting HIV-1 or HIV-2 infection in a cell comprising the step of contacting the cell with the synthetic oligonucleotide of claim 1.

35. (Original) A method of inhibiting HIV-1 or HIV-2 infection in a cell comprising the step of contacting the cell with the synthetic oligonucleotide of claim 6.

36. (Original) A method of inhibiting HIV-1 or HIV-2 infection in a cell comprising the step of contacting the cell with the synthetic oligonucleotide of claim 7.

37. (Original) A method for introducing an intact oligonucleotide into a mammal, the method comprising the step of orally administering to the mammal the oligonucleotide of claim 1,

whereby the oligonucleotide is present in intact form in the systemic plasma following oral administration.

38. (Original) A method for introducing an intact oligonucleotide into a mammal, the method comprising the step of orally administering to the mammal the oligonucleotide of claim 6,

whereby the oligonucleotide is present in intact form in the systemic plasma following oral administration.

39. (Original) A method for introducing an intact oligonucleotide into a mammal, the method comprising the step of orally administering to the mammal the oligonucleotide of claim 7,

whereby the oligonucleotide is present in intact form in the systemic plasma following oral administration.